Hi. Thanks for answering my call for people to interview about Flash games. I have a bunch of questions outlined below and the more in-depth your answers, the better, but please don't feel pressured to answer every one of them.

Please note in this list of questions: when I ask you about "Flash games" specifically, I mean the ones released in-browser between 1999 and 2021. If you're still making games with Flash, great! I'd like to hear about it. But since this book is mainly focused on Flash games in the browser, I'd like answers based around that context.

Personal History

- **Tell me about yourself.**

My name is Paolo Pedercini, I grew up in Italy but I'm based in the United States. I've been working under the project name Molleindustria since 2003. I teach game design and digital art at Carnegie Mellon University, and I run a small gallery/arcade for experimental games in Pittsburgh, PA.

- **What Flash games did you make?**

I made over 20 games, my most popular ones were probably the McDonald's Videogame, Every Day the Same Dream, Phone Story, and Unmanned.

- **How else were you involved in the Flash community?**

I've never been involved in any Flash-related community. My communities were centered around art, activism and, later, indie games more broadly.

- **What was your first Flash game that you played, and on what site?**

The first one I remember was Fly Guy.

- **What do you remember about the community? How they interacted, voted, shared games with each other?**

I remember being extremely impressed by Newground's architecture. The community-driven filtering and moderation was way ahead of its time. The users were great too. I published a bunch of provocative, openly leftist, semi-broken games there expecting to get destroyed in the reviews, but the kids were always open minded and willing to engage with unusual experiences. It was on Newgrounds that I realized the "gamers" were not a monolithic conservative group as they were often portrayed by the media in the early 00s.

- **What are your favorite Flash games? Both massive and obscure.**

Oh boy… Windosill, Captain forever, Dys4ia, Coil, Republia Times, The Antiwar Game, QWOP, I wish I were the Moon. I'm sure I'm forgetting some crucial ones...

- **What was your favorite portal and why? Any runner-ups?**
- **What would you consider your strongest memory of Flash gaming? It doesn't have to be necessarily the best.**

- **Do you remember any portals, users or general stories that a casual community member might not know of? I'd love to get some more obscure stories into the book.**
- **Overall, what is your favorite part of Flash games, major or minor?**

Developing for Flash

- **What made you consider developing a Flash game?**

In high school I had made some games with a software called Click 'n Play, which was a precursor of GameMaker, but then I stopped thinking about games when I flunked out of a computer science-oriented school.
I pivoted to art and design in college and I approached Flash via web design and animation. I gradually added more interactive stuff as Flash added more scripting features. In a way we "grew" together, moving from web animation to games.

- **How difficult was it for you to get started?**
- **What was the first Flash game you released, and on what site? What do you remember about its release?**

My first game was Tamatipico, it was a virtual pet except the pet was a poor precarious worker you had to exploit and micromanage. It was made to promote a national referendum to defend labor rights in Italy, and it was also used to launch a website of a post-communist party I was part of.

- **What drew you to making Flash games specifically? Did other platforms like Shockwave, Unity, Java or so on carry any appeal?**

I absolutely loved the vector drawing tools and I missed them every day. There is literally no application today that properly replicates the capabilities of Flash when it comes to making and animating vector art.
I also loved how you could create assets, animate and program in the same IDE. It drove more serious programmers insane, but just made the workflow so streamlined. I'm a much better developer now but I'm unable to make things as quickly as I used to in Flash.

- **Did you work alone? If not, who did you work with, and how did you meet them?**
- **Can you give me just a quick, point-by-point overview of how you developed games? The technical side of things purely - how you program for Flash, how you create resources like graphics & sound (if applicable), how functionality improved & things changed in later versions of Flash, anything you can think of that might be noteworthy or interesting to the nerdy-minded.**
- **Were there any interesting technical challenges you had to face while making a game in Flash?**
- **What was the development community like? Any forums or boards or other sites that are worthy of mention?**

- **Did you make games as a hobby, on the side, or a full time job? Did it ever get 'serious', and if so, when?**

I made games on the side, as a form of activism and/or art. I've always resisted the temptation of selling my games since it would limit the potential audience. If you are paying for a socially conscious game, chances are you already "agreeing" with it. I didn't want to preach to the choir.
Surprisingly, my weird agitprop games landed me many commercial gigs and eventually, and indirectly

- **What was your first "viral game", what were the circumstances around it, and what was it like inside your head and on your site/portal entry when it did go viral?**

It's hard to tell because I almost immediately got a lot of attention from both traditional media and internet based ones. I can't remember how many times a big blog or an early social media channel would just link to my artisanal site and take it down due to excess bandwidth.

- **Did you ever have a strategy when making games, marketing or business wise? Or did you just work on what was fun?**

Before social media imposed a viral logic to every bit of culture ever, I had quite a lot of faith in the power of internet users to organically select the best, more noteworthy content. So I've never put much effort into marketing. Seeing which games would spread virally and which one didn't was part of my project.

- **What was it like working with Flash portals like Kongregate? What sort of deals would you make, if any? Did you ever use something like Flash Game License, and if so, can you tell me about your experience with it?**

I've got a couple of deals with Addicting Games. They sponsored Oiligarchy and paid me for a version of the McDonald's videogame without the McDonald's logo.

- **How much did the community support you, and how did they contribute to your success?**
- **Were you around pre-and-post Macromedia era Flash? Are you able to draw a comparison between the two companies' handling of the technology?**
- **Do you think Adobe buying Flash at the end of the day caused more damage than it would have if Macromedia hadn't been bought out?**

The End of Days

- **At what point did Flash go into "freefall" in the public consciousness, in your point of view?**

(I'm rewoding a bit from this talk https://www.molleindustria.org/blog/gone-with-a-flash-talk/)

According to Internet folklore what killed Flash was Steve Jobs' 2010 Thoughts on Flash. In a rather extraordinary move, Steve Jobs published an open letter explaining why the Flash plugin was going to be blocked on all iPhones. He mentioned open formats, security, and battery consumption. But it was really a business maneuver, a vertically integrated company fighting a potential threat.

The App Store just launched and it was meant to commercialize casual games, software toys and applications – the kind of stuff typically made in Flash.
When you play a Flash game Apple doesn't make any money. When you buy a game from the Apple store, Apple takes 30% of the revenues. They also force the developers to pay a fee and use their proprietary technologies.

It was definitely a big blow, but we have to keep in mind that the Internet was already moving away from Flash with HTML5 and for very good reasons.

The plugin was installed virtually in all browsers, so Adobe tried to leverage it by creating a whole set of development tools around it to build all sorts of dynamic websites. They basically took this animation and web design tool and used it as a trojan horse to reshape the world wide web around Adobe products.

That was concerning because the internet runs on open formats. You don't want one company to own the technology you use to read news, send email, do banking and so on.
My take is: Adobe's attempted power grab caused the downfall of Flash. Flash games were simply collateral damage.

- **Have you ever met anyone blatantly anti-Flash or anti-Flash games specifically? Did you try to change their mind? Were you successful?**
- **What didn't you like about Flash as a platform, either during its peak or fall? Anything specifically egregious worth mentioning?**

I hate how despite the massive popularity of Flash games, Adobe didn't put any effort into game specific features. It had zero support for game controllers, it didn't want you to use the right mouse click, accessing external files was a pain. Adobe seemed just interested in taking over the web by leveraging the ubiquitous plugin. If they stayed in their lane, and looked at what people were actually making with their application, Flash today could have been a game engine rivaling Unity or an actual professional-grade animation suite.

- **Around what point did Flash stop becoming profitable and/or getting enough back to cover development time? Did this make you want to stop making Flash games?**

- **How many people were still playing your games at the end? Did you ever find out overall total player numbers? Any thoughts on those numbers?**
- **Any opinions on the state of the indie gamedev industry, and what it was like compared to Flash at its rise & peak?**
- **How do you feel about Flash having gone away from browsers? Do you miss it? What do you miss the most about it?**

- **If you could do it all again, would you?**
- **What have you been up to since Flash left the public consciousness?**

Today I'm making games with a variety of tools: Unity, p5.js, paper…

- **What do you think of efforts like AwayFL and Ruffle? Do you think they might recapture the magic of Flash in the browser if ever completed?**

Ruffle is working pretty well with early games. I think in a couple of years most Flash games will be back on browsers. I bet if Adobe released the source code of their dead plugin, the emulators would be 100% functional in a matter of months. But they don't care, they are too busy reselling the same software over and over.

- **Speaking of recapturing the magic, how do you feel about HTML5 games today?**

What's really missing is an IDE that lets you make HTML5 games with the same ease as Flash. Downloadable games outside of walled gardens like the App Store are being increasingly blocked and the browser could still play are big role in free, casual experiences, the tools are just not there.

- **How can we play your games now that Flash has been exorcised from most browsers?**

All my flash games are downloadable for Mac and Pc.

- **Are you still using Flash for anything in particular today?**
- **Anything else you want to say?**